

workers. They have no voice. They earn pennies. It takes them 2 weeks of work to even afford one pair of the trousers they make that are sold in this country for \$39. What is right about that?

□ 2045

What about those people? Are we not to think about them as well? Yes, those jobs were lost in South Carolina or Mississippi, or they moved somewhere from this country, and we fought that with these unfair trade advantages that some of these multinationals have.

Now, what this is doing is it is putting a Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval on a system that we know is so exploitative. It is bad for our people and horrendous for those doing the work in these packing sheds and these hot, dusty textile companies that no one will ever see.

I remember hearing a letter written by one woman working in a company that was headed by a South Korean who was making the women work faster and faster and faster and faster with no rights. That is where our country was 70 years ago, and we got rid of that kind of sweatshop condition, or at least we got the laws on the books to allow people to have some dignity in their work.

We should not be giving any Good Housekeeping Stamp of Approval to a system which will approve that kind of sweatshop labor that is going down in Central America, which this will exacerbate.

We should listen to the people, listen to those who are demonstrating, listen to those traveling here, listen to their religious leaders and using our power, which is our marketplace. They all want to take their stuff in here. So let us lift standards elsewhere as a condition of market entry, and let us make sure, by raising living standards, we do not keep washing out jobs in this country more and more.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentlewoman from Toledo, Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR).

As we wrap up in the last 60 or 90 seconds, what I again point out, what the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) said, working conditions and the standard of living in all of these CAFTA countries. Nicaragua, people are making \$2,300 a year; Honduras, \$2,600 a year. This agreement does nothing to lift up living standards in those countries.

It means, one, they cannot buy American products as the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCARELL) has said, but it also means they continue to live in abject poverty. And this agreement does nothing to lift them up. That is why the opposition to CAFTA is so broad. That is why the cardinal is here this week. That is why Central American legislators have come up here and paid their own way to get here, I believe. That is why reli-

gious leaders in our country who see this issue, this agreement, as a moral question, what we do to the least among us, and so many people, religious leaders, advocates for the poor, advocates for working people, unions, small businesses that care about their communities, Republicans and Democrats alike, have joined against this agreement.

That is why if this vote on CAFTA were held tonight, if it were held right now, this agreement would go down by 20 or 25 votes. I will make a prediction, and I have heard the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCARELL) and the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) say the same sort of thing, we know that in the next 2 weeks, if this comes up to a vote, that the majority leader, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), the most prominent and most powerful Member of this body, will put immense pressure on Republican Members to change their votes, to vote against what they were going to do, to change their vote and vote for this agreement. And the prediction I would make is if this comes to a vote, if in fact they think it is close enough for a vote, they will bring it up in the middle of the night; the roll call will stay open not the regular 15 minutes, but for an hour, 2 hours or 3 hours, as they have done before; and if it in fact passes, it will pass by no more than two or three votes.

That is the way business is all too often done here. And when this agreement so clearly runs counter to what most Americans want, it runs counter to what most Central Americans and Latin Americans want, it runs counter to what is good for business and what is good for workers in our country, the only way that they can possibly pass it is to twist arms, exert all kinds of pressures, open up the taxpayer bank and give out all kinds of pork projects to Members so they can get this agreement through. If it passes, it will pass by no more than two or three votes, we can count on that.

But if this Congress, this House of Representatives, follows what the word "representative" means and really represents the people whom we are supposed to represent, this agreement will be defeated and Members of this body will look for a new, renegotiated CAFTA that will lift living standards up in the six Latin Americans countries and in the United States and will actually be a win for everyone involved.

Mr. Speaker, I particularly thank my friend, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR), who has been so stalwart in this for so many years, and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCARELL), who speaks so eloquently about our constitutional rights and sovereignty and where we should go as a Nation.

## ANSWERING THE CALL FOR FREEDOM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PRICE of Georgia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to highlight one of the most under-reported and freedom-affirming policies that the world has seen since the end of World War II.

For centuries, the world has heard the oppressed, the downtrodden and the vulnerable cry out for their freedoms, for their rights and for a chance to emerge from the shadows of the tyranny and bloodshed that they had lived with. Those yearning for basic liberties and for basic rights have occasionally been led by vocal and dedicated women of the world. Their's has been too often a silent battle, however, with no clear voice, no champion and no opportunity to cry out for their freedom.

I am proud to say tonight that this Congress and this President have heard those cries. We have recognized the unmistakable voice of freedom rumbling across the ocean and into these hallowed chambers, and we have answered that call.

Too often, this House has dealt with the aftermath of turning a blind eye to the horrors of present regimes and of past despots. This Republican-led Congress has said, "no more," to those policies. No longer should women be denied the right to vote, no longer should women be treated as second class citizens, no longer should women not be allowed to be a citizen at all.

The world today is changing rapidly, and we are helping to make it better for our children's future. Since President Bush took office in 2001, this Congress has supported an agenda of democracy, freedom and expansion of rights for all peoples throughout the world. The list of non-democratic regimes that have seen significant reforms since 2001 is long and significant. Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, Georgia, the Ukraine and others have all held elections, increased minority rights or have committed to democratic reforms.

We have before us a picture of an Iraqi woman who voted. She was so proud that she was able to vote. We see the ink-stained finger that told everyone that at last she had the opportunity to vote.

While all of these are important and significant events, it is the United States' foreign policy that furthers the advancement of freedoms and rights for women that is the most striking for me. The world watched October 19 as 19-year-old Mokadasa Sidekey cast the first vote in Afghan's landmark presidential election. Here we have some more women participating in the Iraqi elections proudly holding up their ballots.

We also have the picture of the thousands of women lined up in Afghanistan to go to vote. They value that privilege. They value that ability that they now have to vote. Today, women comprise 41 percent of the 8.2 million Afghan voters. With our support, these women will continue to lead to fan the flame of democracy and give them hope for a brighter future.

Tonight, you will hear personal stories from Members who have traveled to countries like Jordan, Iraq and Afghanistan. From the tales of women who voted for the first time in their family's history to the meetings with newly elected female representatives of Iraq, these stories are truly inspiring.

Now I would like to yield to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE).

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Florida for allowing me this time and for doing this very important event to recognize the freedom that women have obtained because of the United States and the United States' policy with the world and the sacrifice of American troops.

History will record the devil deeds of Saddam Hussein, the tyrant of the desert, especially his crimes against his own people, the women of Iraq. They cry out from their unmarked graves across the wastelands created by Saddam Hussein in the desert sands. Those women were raped and tortured. Some were beheaded in the presence of their own families, and after they were murdered, their bodies were abused.

But on January 30, 2005, the women of Iraq spoke out for the living and for the dead. It was their chance to be a part of something that never before ever happened in that part of the world, a free election.

The world, civilization, began between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Those civilizations have always had a form of government other than a democracy. They have had monarchies, dictatorships, tyrants, but never a democracy.

I was privileged to be in Iraq on January 30, along with the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS). The two of us were there to witness this first free election.

The skeptics, the critics, they said it would never happen, that the Iraqi people did not understand democracy, that they would not vote, they would not show up, that they were intimidated by the terrorists. Well, the skeptics, the critics, the cynics, were wrong yet again.

Having been in Baghdad and Fallujah and other parts of northern Iraq, I went to those polling places, and when dawn came, the whole country was shut down to vehicular traffic. But, slowly and surely and defiantly, the Iraqi people walked to the polls. They took their families, they took their relatives, their neighbors.

They were threatened that, if they voted, they would be killed, and, sure enough, 57 of them were murdered on

election day going to or from the polls. One lady was murdered with her 8-year-old son as she left a voting place in northern Iraq, a school. Almost 300 others were wounded because they decided to exercise the right to be free and vote for their own rulers.

But yet they voted, in spite of the intimidation. There was almost 60 percent voter turnout on that glorious election day, "freedom day" for the Iraqi people.

The insurgents tried to intimidate. They tried to harm, they tried to murder those people, but they voted anyway, and, after they voted, they stayed around the polling places to watch this event. They took photographs of family members voting. Then, when they would leave the election polling booths, they would walk down the street with that right forefinger, ink-stained, held high in the air defiant to those terrorists, because the terrorists said, even with that marking, that would mark them to be murdered later. Yet they did not care, because freedom was more important to them.

I talked to many Iraqis that day through an interpreter, and I remember one senior citizen, she was a senior-citizen citizen, an Iraqi lady, and she told me through an interpreter that she had lost her son to the murderous Saddam Hussein, and she wanted to thank me for the sacrifice of our sons and daughters, American sons and daughters, that they had made it that she and her other Iraqi friends could vote that day.

American troops are spreading liberty and freedom. They are liberating enslaved peoples. The best ambassadors for freedom that we have in the United States are our young men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan liberating those enslaved people.

□ 2100

You know, the critics that say we should cut and run from Iraq now should remember that freedom has always cost. It has always cost all people who want to be free. And people in Iraq are free and are fighting continuously for this liberty because of Americans.

I hope we all appreciate the sacrifice our troops are making and understand that they have done more for freedom and dignity, the freedom and dignity especially of women, than any sign-carrying protester. We should just ask those noble and brave Iraqi women that held their fingers high.

My grandmother used to say, who was really the most influential person in my life, that there is nothing more powerful than a woman that has made up her mind. And I think we have seen in the Iraqi women, and I saw personally, that they have made up their mind to be free, that they will not be enslaved and abused or neglected any longer. And it is all because the United States believes in freedom for all people.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from

Texas (Mr. POE) made some excellent points about the bravery of the Iraqi people in going to the polls.

You know, we will go to the polls, we may have to wait a little while to get in. It is nowhere near the long lines that they experienced in Iraq. And we have to remember that we are free to go to the polls. We do not face the kind of intimidation that the Iraqi women faced.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have been joined by the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT), who actually has traveled and can tell us some information about the women that she met, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate all that the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) is doing with the Women's Caucus, and she has done a great job bringing these women's issues out and how important they are to all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit first about the Afghan women, because I had an opportunity to work with them. It was before some of our women Members were even here, it was in 2002, when there were a group of women, first of all starting out with women lawyers from Afghanistan, came over to meet with the Women's Caucus and have a discussion.

Later on, Habiba Sorabi, Afghanistan's minister for women's affairs, came over to meet with us and discuss what the mission was all about. And she talked about that the mission for women was to restore and improve the rights of Afghan women and to strengthen their legal, their economic, political, and social status throughout the country.

At that time the Members of the Women's Caucus here came away convinced that the work of their women's ministry was absolutely critical to the rebuilding of a peaceful and democratic Afghanistan in which the women and girls would have full rights.

And one of the things that we did was to establish and to find funding for women's centers over in Afghanistan. As you see the picture there with the Afghan elections, wearing the burkas and the veils, and still how they go around covered. So they needed a place where women could go where they could have health care, where they called take their children for education, and where they could have job opportunities to work on their creations of rugs or chickens or whatever they were going to do to establish an economic basis.

And with that, we were able to get from the Appropriations Committee, from foreign ops, money to actually build women's centers in all of the provinces of Afghanistan. And they are being built, many of them, from Kabul to the hinterlands, have been established to give the women that.

And then after that, we also were able to not really to go into Afghanistan, but to go over early in the morning to the State Department, 7 a.m.,

and talk to women that were involved in writing the Constitution for Afghanistan, to make sure that they were included.

And we had to do it so early in the morning because they could not be out after dark, and with the time change, they were at the end of the day, we were at the very beginning of our day, the sunrise services.

And we were really able to talk to them and give them encouragement and advice in what to do. And they also came over here to spend some time with us really as going out on our day-to-day business to see how a democracy operates, how the House of Representatives works. We wore them out, I must say. But they were able to spend some time with us.

And then in January I traveled to Amman, Jordan, to meet with women who were on the list in Iraq, who were running for office to be elected to the national assembly. And it is a little bit different from what we were doing here.

We have our precincts and our designation, our States, but there this was a national list. There were four of us that went: the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. GRANGER), the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TAUSCHER), and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) and myself.

We were over there to train them in the election process. Now it is a little bit different, because here were a group of women running for office who could not have their names on a list, known, who could not have their pictures on a brochure, who could not pass out any literature that they were running, because of the fear of assassination.

And as a matter of fact, many of these women were intimidated. One of them lost her 17-year-old son to an assassin as he was trying to protect her. Another one was kidnapped and held for ransom. Another one lost five members of their family.

But these women were willing to really put their lives on the line to run for national office. And I think we sometimes wonder, you know, we take so much for granted: the opportunity to run for office, the opportunity to vote. And here were women that really said, we possibly will lose our lives, and some of them have lost their lives, and some of those that were elected.

But what happened was that we met with Shiites, Sunnis, Kurds, Independents, and Christians. And there was a group of about 22 members. And they were from all of the different parties. And the first thing, one of the first things that they said as we were sitting at the table, why? You are from different parties? And we said, yes. And they said, well, why are you laughing and talking together? You are from different parties so you really should not be speaking together.

We said, that is one thing about a democracy. We have different parties, but we respect each other. We are friends, we are colleagues, and we laugh and

talk and joke; but we do have different philosophies. And so with that, these women were able to sit around and talk together on how they were going to get over their differences, because the Sunnis were there saying no, no, we should postpone the national elections.

And the others were saying, no, we need to go forward, but we want you, being the Sunnis, to join us. They wanted all participation from all of the different groups. And so some of the Sunnis said, well, maybe that is a good idea.

So they did learn that democracy is the art of possible. And so it was that after that election, 25 percent of those elected out of the 275 were to be women. Well, 33 percent were elected and 33 percent were women. Of course, I got a call from one of them, or an e-mail, which we have e-mailed back and forth on election day. She said, I was the first to vote in my district. I cast the first vote. And it was fine. Everything was going fine.

So they were elected. Many of those that came, were elected. Then in April there were three of us that went back to Jordan: the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. GRANGER), the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS), and myself. And we met went back to meet with 150 Iraqi women who were chosen because of the leaders in their provinces, leaders like mayors, and were developing into the leaders in their country.

And that was to train them in democracy. And just think, suddenly you have a democracy and you have come from a dictatorship. What do you do? So we had a lot of role-playing with them and instant translation so that we could talk to them. And I have to tell you that some of them talk very loud. I think it is a cultural thing when they want to make their points.

So we would say, cannot hear you through the earphones. But we learned that this is just a cultural difference in how we differ. But one thing that they said was that they did not really want to have a quota system. They wanted to be like us where they ran as women, and they were elected. And we said, well, now you have got 33 percent. Just take it easy for a while, because we only have 14 percent in the Congress. You are way ahead of us. So keep up the good work and make sure that you stay that way, and one day you will have the same as we do.

One day you will have the brochures that you pass out. One day you will have the sponges and the combs and the pencils that you are giving out to get elected. But what they have done, I think, has been fascinating, and they have just been able to move ahead and to be able to find out how to run a democracy. I think they are way ahead of the game; they really caught on very quickly.

We had them doing some role-playing. They would pass on to the next group some of the tips that we would give them, like tell the provincial

council that you are talking to what your name is, what group you represent, and why you want them to do something.

As each group, during the 2½ days that we were there, came up and did some of this role-playing, they got better and better. But they loved doing it, and we loved having them.

But again they came to us at great risk. They had to drive through Iraq, and they were shot at, a group of them was held at the Jordanian border for 13 hours, and you know what they have gone through for the freedoms that we believe in, that we sometimes do not, you know, take the great care and go out to vote, that we do not do the things that they think is, you know, they are willing to give their lives for.

I think that we have to honor them and all of the other women that we see throughout these countries that are now going to vote and having the elections and making sure that they are included and their children are going to be included. I think that we honor them. I am very delighted to have the opportunity to be here tonight.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. I appreciate the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) telling us first hand your mentoring project with some female candidates, and also some supporters who just want to make sure that women are playing an active role in both the Jordanian Government and the Iraqi Government.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Let me just say one more thing too. The message from them was, do not leave us until we have a stable government, because they want to have the freedom and the democracy that we have.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. I found that also when I traveled to Iraq: do not leave us. I wanted to remind you and the other Members of Congress that a week from this Thursday, on July 21, we are again hosting some Iraqi women who will tell us of the progress that they have made in Iraq, both for women's rights and for human rights in general, and their view of what is going on in Iraq.

We all know that, unfortunately, the media does not always portray the good things that are happening in Iraq and Afghanistan, and this will be a great opportunity for us to glean some information from the Iraqi women who are here for us to also take back to our constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that we have been joined this evening by the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Welcome.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) for her leadership on this issue and all the work that she is doing to assist women in the House in a bipartisan effort as she chairs the Women's Caucus, and working to serve as a role model for our colleagues and our friends in Afghanistan and Iraq, showing them how to take that leadership role, how to lead by doing and role modeling.

And I thank the gentlewoman for her work in that effort. And I also thank you for organizing this tonight and taking the leadership role in drawing our attention to Afghanistan and Iraq and the importance of women in those issues.

I had the opportunity to be a part of the CODEL in October of 2003 that was led by the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE). It was an all-female CODEL. It was a bipartisan CODEL. And how excited we were to go and be a part of what was going on there, to see firsthand what was taking place.

We were so touched with some of the women that we met in a women's center in Mosul, as they poured into a little house, hot tiny little house, cramped rooms, and talked with us through an interpreter about their hopes and their dreams. One of the things that struck us was that there was not a word that they used that translated into mentor.

□ 2115

And a word that is so important to us. So our delegation sat about explaining to these women that a mentor is different from a sister or a parent, it is more than a teacher, and how a mentor is someone that will walk with you and stand with you and go through all of the trials and the bumps and the starts of creating a place, a life, a spot for yourself. And what a wonderful lesson that was for us to realize how important it is to mentor and how important it is for us to realize how uniquely American it is for us to put our arms around mentoring and pulling up along with us those that we would seek to help and work with.

We have, as the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) was mentioning, brought some of the women with us here to be a part of what was going on in our Nation's great capital so that they could experience and live and have an idea of how we work in freedom and how democracy works and how we apply it each and every day in our lives. I have also had the opportunity to have some of them in Tennessee with me. We had them in Nashville at Vanderbilt University at the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center. And there they had the opportunity to meet with and talk with some of the members of our military, female officers and members who had been in Iraq, who had fought for their freedom. How wonderful to watch them say thank you.

This past March, I returned to Iraq, and I would like to share with you just a little bit of an update on a couple of women that we have mentored and have worked with over there. One has three children who are currently in school in the northern part of Iraq. They are in a village school there that actually has been put in place by a school in my district. It is a private endeavor. They are working with the local officials. The children are happy. They are excited, and they are learn-

ing. Each and every day, they learn a little bit more, not only about reading, writing and arithmetic as we like to say, but also about freedom, about democracy, and how to live and prosper and work in a free society. The elections were great for them. It was a lesson, a living lesson in democracy.

Another, in Tikrit, I had the opportunity to visit with when I returned there and visited with the troops, she came on post. What a wonderful reunion we had, and we celebrated the success that she and her colleagues had enjoyed during the election.

Mr. Speaker, it was wonderful to watch her reach out to the troops to say thank you; thank you for opening new doors, thank you for helping give a new life to me and my people.

Mr. Speaker, I had an e-mail from this young lady the other day. She said, I request your help, I am applying for a Fullbright scholarship. And she wanted a letter of recommendation. How exciting for me to take out a pen and paper and sit down and draft a letter talking about the tenacious spirit, the love of freedom that this young woman has displayed. How wonderful to know that once she, who could not even walk outside her door without fear of what may lie beyond that door with Saddam Hussein and his henchmen, she who helped carry out the elections in her province, that she now says, You know what, freedom brings the opportunity for education and I can apply for this scholarship. That is progress. It is progress of providing hope and opportunity and encouraging the human soul. How wonderful that that exists for these folks.

Just a couple of thoughts on the elections, Mr. Speaker, that I do want to touch on. I mentioned my friend there in Tikrit, and not only did I hear from her stories about the elections and some of the things that they did there, it was the women, as my colleague from Illinois was saying and also my colleague from Florida was saying, it was the women in Iraq who led the way to the voting booth, and how exciting that was for us. There were stories of how they hid people in ambulances and police cars, and they made their way along with first 10, then 20, and then 100. And then as the posters have shown, lines and lines of women who were coming to exercise that freedom.

Some of the emails from some of our Iraqi friends were so inspiring. A few little tidbits of those: We are voting with courage. We showed bravery and great strength. We showed brave hearts and blue fingers. We achieved our identity in front of a watching world, and then, to sum it up, saying thank you. Thank you to the best friend Iraq has ever had, the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, they mean every word of that. They mean every single word. And I was thrilled on July 3rd and 4th as I opened my e-mails, as I went about my district celebrating this Nation's independence and freedom, that I had notes from these individuals, so many

of these, congratulating me on living in America and congratulating America on having another independence day.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the opportunity to speak and to share, and I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for her time and effort in this.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee. I think anyone who has had any exposure to the Iraqi women know how very, very brave they are.

Just this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, in this House of Representatives, we debated a resolution honoring Kuwait on the recent efforts to give women the right to vote. As is the case with many Middle Eastern nations, women are nowhere near equal to men when it comes to basic freedoms and rights that we take for granted every day. However, Kuwait's leaders have recognized that denying half of your population the right to vote and participating in the business of the nation is wrong. As Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has said, half a democracy is not a democracy.

While Kuwait is not a democracy, giving only half the population a voice in their government is not a policy this Congress should support and one that I am glad that Kuwait's leaders are changing. I certainly applaud the House leadership for bringing this resolution to the floor and for recognizing the significant changes made for women's rights in the Middle East. If women are not allowed to participate in the decision-making process, if women are denied the right to run for and seek elective office, if women are barred from determining their own future, then those women will suffer oppression and human rights' violations.

When given the chance, women have proven they will participate in the electoral process. In Iraq, during the first free and fair elections in several decades, it was the women of many towns who led the surge to the polling booths. Women showed that they were not afraid to take their fate in their own hands and show the world what it truly means to be free.

Now, I would like to recognize my colleague, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY). I appreciate his joining us here this evening to celebrate the rights that Iraqi and Afghani women have recently received, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. GINGREY. Well, I am very, very honored to have the opportunity to join my colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE), Mr. Speaker, and I commend her for putting this hour together to talk about the rights of women.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that the gentlewoman from Florida, with others in this body, have recently put together a women's caucus, a bipartisan effort with Members from both sides of the aisle coming together on women's issues, and I really commend them for

that. I commend her, and I commend the bipartisan spirit, Mr. Speaker, in speaking out on women's issues.

We Members of this body who happen to be physicians, and I think there are now ten of us, Mr. Speaker, including yourself, recently did the same thing coming together in a bipartisan fashion on issues of health care. I think what we are showing tonight as we discuss women's issues is we can do that as a Congress, and our citizens in every district, all 435 of this great body, they want us to do that. They realize we have differences of opinions on certain things, and maybe sometimes it seems like it is virtually impossible to come together, but I know that we can. I know we can on health care issues, and I know we can on women's issues.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) for putting this together, and especially tonight, talking about Afghanistan and Iraq; maybe, in some ways comparing and contrasting their situation, the women in these two countries, compared to what we enjoy today. Mr. Speaker, in this country, women have equal rights, and I think it was mentioned earlier, maybe by the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT), about the fact that in this body, in the combined bodies of the House and Senate, 14 percent of 535 Members are women. Yet in these elections that just took place on January 30 of this year in Iraq, some 31 percent of the 275 seats in the transitional national assembly went to these brave women who, before that, under Saddam Hussein and that brutal dictatorship, they were not even given the opportunity to vote.

Through our efforts and trying to bring some democracy, Mr. Speaker, to that part of the world, we have given them the opportunity, as we turn the country back over to the Iraqi people, for them to hold their own elections. And not only did women vote, they voted in force. Thirty-one percent in their very first election are now members of the transitional national assembly. I think it is a wonderful thing that they have that opportunity.

And as I said, Mr. Speaker, so much of these things, these freedoms that we just take for granted, for instance, there is no longer a glass ceiling in this country. I know in my own medical practice we had six doctors, three men and three women, and in that specialty of obstetrics and gynecology, probably 60 percent nationwide of the specialists are women.

When my wife, Mr. Speaker, graduated from college, and I will not say how many years ago because she will get mad at me if I do that, but with a degree in psychology and a minor in religion, there were not really great opportunities for her in the job market. She did not have a teacher's degree so she could not teach, and so it was either secretarial or flight attendant status, and that was really just a few short years ago.

I am so proud, being the father of three daughters and the grandfather of two granddaughters, two grandsons as well, Mr. Speaker, to see that those little girls have an opportunity to, yes, be a mom and a homemaker if they want to, or be out in the business world at the highest level of corporate America, the highest level of this body politic that we enjoy so much here in Washington. These are things that we just kind of take for granted. But thanks to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE) and her leadership on this issue, to come tonight and to spend this time and this special hour talking about these brave women who stood in line, we all are filled with such admiration.

Mr. Speaker, I remembered the picture, I guess this one right here, and I want to show it again, because I will never forget this one, with that peace sign and that purple indelible ink to prove that there was no vote of fraud; that a person would vote once and only once. Maybe this took a week or more, by the way, Mr. Speaker, as you know, to wear off.

□ 2130

These women were putting themselves in grave danger of being killed because they had the courage to go and vote when the minority was determined to see that they did not, that they returned to the same old same old.

My colleagues mentioned that one of the recurring themes that they heard when they were visiting, the Women's Caucus actually went to Iraq and Afghanistan. And what those women were saying, the new leaders who are struggling to get their feet under them, please do not leave us. Please do not leave us. We need your help. They were crying out, we need mentoring. We are new at this, and we want to succeed.

This is the same thing that the president and vice president, this new transitional National Assembly is saying to us today in regard to this question of Mr. President of the United States, when are you going to bring our troops home. As the President said in North Carolina just last week, if the Iraqi people wanted us to bring the troops home tomorrow we would; but clearly they do not. What a terrible message it would be to set a date certain and say in a year or year and a half we are coming home, whether we have succeeded or not. No. These men and women in Iraq are absolutely right when they say do not leave us, and we will not leave them. It is times like this when we bring this home to our colleagues and remind them of what we have accomplished.

I have been to Iraq twice. I went the first time in December of 2003, 5 days after the capture of Saddam Hussein. We went to Fallujah, and that was before things completely deteriorated in that part of Iraq. I went with a small bipartisan group. Each Member brought something from his or her dis-

trict. I brought school books donated by the great men and women of the Rome Rotary Club, 3,000 pounds of school books and equipment. Yet when we went into schools, they were all closed. There were no little kids in those elementary schools. There were no teachers. But today those schools are open. There are teachers to instruct those little kids in elementary school. And yes, Mr. Speaker, a good portion of those students are female.

Before we gave these wonderful people an opportunity for freedom and equal rights, little girls were not given an opportunity to get an education. It is unbelievable to us. We take so much for granted.

Again, the opportunity to share with the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE), the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT), and the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) to talk about this issue tonight, I thank the gentlewoman for staying up late and for preparing this and for giving me an opportunity to participate, because, truly, we cannot go home and leave them alone. We have to continue and finish the job.

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for joining us this evening and for sharing with us the stories he brought back when he went to Iraq, not just once but twice. The majority of the Members of this body have been to Iraq, and every one of them came back with the same information of please do not leave. Do not leave us. We need to have time so we can stand on our own.

Mr. Speaker, one of the surest ways to guarantee long-term success in spreading democracy and success throughout the world is to support and promote the education of children and especially the education of young girls. When the Taliban ruled Afghanistan, girls were legally prohibited from going to school. That is right, girls were prohibited from going to school. This Congress heard the sad stories of education being denied to women, of keeping them from making better futures for themselves and their families.

Well, now that the United States has liberated the Afghan women, that oppression is no more. As President Bush has said many times, girls go to school now in Afghanistan. Obviously, this is a good sign for our future.

Since the U.S. and allied forces overthrew the oppressive Taliban regime in 2001, approximately 5 million children have enrolled in Afghan schools. Approximately 40 percent of them are women. The United States and the Republican-led Congress have also been leaders in ensuring that the Afghan people have the resources they need to rebuild their ravished and neglected homeland and make it suitable for children's education. We have appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars for Afghan education, and our soldiers have helped construct countless

schools throughout the country. Overall, the United States has given Afghanistan \$4 billion in 3 years since the fall of the Taliban. For Afghanistan education alone, USAID has allocated nearly \$218 million in aid. According to the State Department, approximately \$60 million has been earmarked for primary education. This is more than the amount given for education to Egypt, which is the third largest recipient of foreign aid from the United States.

Certainly these are significant sums of money and show the United States' commitment to the Afghan people. These sums show our continued desire to work together to forge a partnership for the future.

In 2003, during my first few months in Congress, I actually went on a congressional delegation trip to Iraq and saw the conditions on the ground there. We talked to women. We talked to men. We talked to children and doctors. Almost to a person the request was there, please do not leave. At first I thought it was because they liked me, they did not want me to leave. They said they did not want troops to leave until the country could stand on its own.

Today, women in Iraq can go to school and go to the market and hold a job. And they can vote. As we saw here the very proud Iraqi woman displaying the new-found freedom that she has. These brave women now have the chance to determine their own future now that they know what it is like to savor the sweet taste of freedom and to make their nation a better place for their children and grandchildren.

One of the most important roles that Congress can play in the future development of Middle Eastern democracies is for Members to act as individual mentors to future women leaders. We heard the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) tell us how she was mentoring a young Iraqi woman. In too many nations, women have not participated in the political process. They lack the training and the background and the parliamentary education necessary to be successful in the political arena.

I was so glad to learn that the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) actually helped to mentor women who were contemplating the very dangerous act of running for office in their country.

Following my trip to Iraq, I hosted on two different occasions women coming to my district, Iraqi women coming to my district; and I also hosted a group here in Washington, D.C.

In the group that came here to Washington, D.C., there was a wonderful woman by the name of Nagam Kedhum. She was a woman from Najaf, Iraq; and she wanted to use her new-found political freedom to provide a better life for her two sons. She and I had several discussions on that day about what it meant to be a citizen legislator in the U.S. and how I, as a woman, first got involved in politics.

Since then, women leaders in Congress have hosted several groups of

Iraqi and Afghanistan women in Washington to continue our efforts to mentor them and to engage in mutual learning. I learned a lot from them, and I hope that they learned a lot from me.

In fact, as I mentioned before, the same women members will again host a return trip of Iraqi women a little more than 2 weeks from today. As I hope is clear to all, Members will continue their efforts at outreach and mentorship to future women leaders in the Middle East and throughout the world.

When I brought the Iraqi women to my district on several occasions, I brought them to a crowd of a combination of chambers of commerce and some wonderful service groups in my district, Rotary and Kiwanis. Their story was so poignant. As I explained to my constituents, most of them will never have the opportunity to go to Iraq, but I can bring a face, I can put a face on an Iraqi person who is very grateful for our involvement and very, very grateful for our troops serving in Iraq to help their country become stabilized.

When we hear the stories that the women had to tell, such as one of them, her sister was killed because they thought it was her. Her sister was not involved politically, she was not against Saddam Hussein, she was very complacent, but the one young lady was very, very active in a group that was opposing Saddam Hussein. She lost her sister due to Saddam Hussein's brutality. Her father was also brutalized by Saddam Hussein; and yet she continued to be a brave leader in her country, someone who wanted to ensure that future generations had the freedoms that she wanted for so long and that she fought for and that she wants to make sure that Iraq never goes back to taking those freedoms away from the Iraqi citizens, and women in particular.

Democracy continues to spread throughout the world, and this Congress will continue to support the policies and projects that promote the freedoms and the rights of women. While there is still much to be accomplished, every Member of this body should be proud of how far we have come.

I would once again like to thank all of the Members who joined me this evening and shared their personal and heartfelt stories.

#### INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTION CONDEMNING MEXICO'S ISSUANCE OF OFFENSIVE STAMPS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Miss McMORRIS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLEAVER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CLEAVER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within

which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mr. CLEAVER. Madam Speaker, I have introduced H. Res. 347, a resolution that condemns Mexico for printing and distributing blatantly racist postage stamps; and I am, along with many others, urging Mexican President Vicente Fox to immediately cease printing and distributing the postage stamps and recall from circulation those postage stamps currently on the market.

□ 2145

Madam Speaker, Mexican-Americans and African-Americans have fought for decades to eliminate and erase racial stereotypes and depictions that dominated all forms of media in the early 20th century. On June 29, 2005, the government of Mexico issued a series of five postage stamps commemorating and celebrating Memin Pinguin, a comic book character created in the 1940s who was depicted as a dark-skinned Jim Crow era cartoon. And while this character is depicted as a black child with dark skin and greatly exaggerated lips, similar Jim Crow memorabilia referred to when I was a boy as Pickaninny and his mother Mammy were all over this country. Due to a rise in sensitivity, those things have pretty much been removed from sight. But this particular comic book series is interesting because it is now current. Memin Pinguin is a character who is taunted by white colleagues for his appearance, his speech and mannerisms. The Mexican postal service has authorized the issuance of 750,000 of the stamps which may be used in the Mexican domestic market and the international market. Civil rights organizations such as the National Council of La Raza, I am proud to say; the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the NAACP, I am proud to say; the National Urban League; and the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition have denounced the racist postage stamp series.

I would also say, Madam Speaker, that the Hispanic Caucus of our Congress has also condemned these stamps. This insult comes on the heels of Mexican President Vicente Fox's quote last month as saying the Mexican citizens in this country will work on jobs that even blacks don't want. Ultimately, he apologized for making that statement, but, Madam Speaker, he is sticking by the stamps, even though the President of the United States of America, George Bush, has also condemned the stamps.

This resolution is aimed at getting the people of Mexico, if not the president, to demand that this kind of thing be stopped. Ancestors of Mexican blacks entered that country centuries ago through the Caribbean port city of